

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Claims 39-104 are pending. By this Amendment, claims 1-38 are canceled in favor of new claims 39-104. Reconsideration in view of the above amendments and the following remarks is respectfully requested.

Applicants appreciate the indication in the Office Action that claim 8 would be allowable if rewritten into independent form. By this Amendment, new claim 39 incorporates the subject matter from original claims 1 and 8. In addition, new claim 57 incorporates the subject matter from claims 1 and 8, in addition to further subject matter.

Further, applicants appreciate the indication that claims 25 and 26 would be allowable if rewritten to overcome the rejection under 35 USC §112, second paragraph, as well as including all the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. New claims 55 and 56 are claims 25 and 26 rewritten into independent form, to include the subject matter of claims 1, 17 and 21 (and 25 and 26, respectively).

The subject matter of canceled claim 17, now incorporated into new claim 53, has been clarified to specify that the annular surface is "of the annular piece", in accordance with the Examiner's helpful suggestion. This change in language is for purposes of clarity only, to address the rejection under 35 USC §112, second paragraph. The specific objections to claims 6 and 35 appear to be moot since these claims do not appear in the new claims set.

In view of the above amendments and remarks, applicants respectfully submit that all the claims are patentable and that the entire application is in condition for allowance.


Should the examiner believe that anything further is desirable to place the application in better condition for allowance, he is invited to contact the undersigned at the telephone number listed below.

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Respectfully submitted,

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